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Holiday en ça en là — here and there

"Time and again it has seemed to me that I must drop everything and flee to Switzerland once more. It is a longing, a deep, strong, tugging longing — that is the word". MARK TWAIN.

Well, this is exactly how I feel every year and from January onwards I look forward with great expectation to the moment when I will set foot again on Swiss soil and meet family and friends. Actually, I find that looking forward is very exhilarating because that period lasts much longer than the holiday proper. Last year, the planning was particularly frustrating, what with postal go slows and delays, letters took ages to reach their destination and answers were even slower to come back. What a godsend telephones are now that one can dial directly and the connections are so speedy and clear.

For the last few years, I have tried to travel on different days of the week with a view to overcoming the various strikes, go slows and such like which invariably occur in July and August, but so far I found that one cannot win on that score. Luckily, *Swissair* schedule flights are pretty reliable and I always feel that I am already half-way in the old country when I board the plane.

What impressed me most during my holiday in Switzerland last year was the efficiency of the Swiss railway network and courtesy of the staff in their smart and immaculate navy blue uniforms. I came from Geneva to Lausanne by the excellent bus service and had a good choice of trains to catch for Aigle, my first overnight stay. What I did not know, however, was that the trains for the Valais no longer start automatically from platform 2 or 3 as in the old days, but as I was standing there studying the timetables, I suddenly heard a voice over the loudspeaker announcing the departure of the train to Vevey-Montreux-Aigle and the Valais from platform 5. Down the stairs I rushed and up the other side at full speed, when the ticket collector saw me and said "Hey, Mademoiselle (nice to be called miss) vous voulez attraper ce train?", he got hold of my luggage, pushed me into the last carriage and off we went. It took me some minutes to get my breath back, but I soon sat comfortably admiring the unforgettable scenery of Lac Lemman in a glorious sunset.

The following day, after a brief visit to the Chateau at Aigle, off I went to

the Valais, Sion and Nax "balcon du soleil". The train for Italy was running late and I wondered whether I would be in time at Sion to catch the postal coach and buy a ticket, but here again a friendly ticket collector assured me that I would be alright and he would advise the station in Sion. All went well at the post office ticket desk, and it was suggested that a weekly ticket would be much cheaper and give me free runs on all 17 bus routes in the area.

I received a timetable as well into the bargain.

The Valais was beautiful and unique as ever and I loved the life at the chalet with the family, breakfast on the balcony in warm sunshine with the church carillon ringing gaily; it was delightful. Every day, we went for long walks, combining our rambles from valley to valley with a return journey on the postal coach: Evolene-Les Hauderes looked as lovely as ever to me and I was pleased to see that women still wear their beautiful costumes. Here-mence is a very old village with a most modern church of startling architecture, built in the same concrete as the Grande Dixence dam. The commune of Saviese includes so many villages with poetic names: St. Germain, Granois, Chandolin, Brinii and Drone. Another nice excursion was to Lloye-Vercorin, return by coach to Sierre, train to Sion and hop on the Nax bus. One day, as we entered the post bus and it started raining cats and dogs, we were amused by the ingenuity of the driver who managed to empty each pillar box on the way to Sion without getting wet, by mounting the pavement with the bus!

However, the highlight of my holiday was a train journey to Grandson where I wanted to collect more information about the history of the Chateau and Grandson family. It was such a perfect day, glorious sunshine, warm and cloudless. Although in my childhood we used to spend our holidays in Vaumarcus on Lake Neuchâtel, I could not remember how beautiful, unspoilt and romantic the region was. I will certainly go there again and next year hope to spend a holiday in Estavayer-le-Lac. I was most interested to see the castle again and after my visit was over, browsed in the little shop at the entrance gate looking for interesting literature. I suddenly heard one of the receptionists speak in English with an American accent and my curiosity

got the better of me and I could not resist to ask why she was here in Grandson. I found out that she was Swiss-American from Chicago and was helping Mr. Heer the Curator. When in the course of conversation I mentioned that I was Anglo-Swiss and had written a short story on the de Grandsons in England, the receptionist could have knocked me down with a feather when she told me that my article in the *Swiss Observer* had been sent to Mr. Heer who would like to have a word with me. Both he and Mrs. Yolande Moody were terribly kind to me and gave me some books to help me in my research work on Othon 1er and Othon 3e Chevalier et Poete. I will never forget that day and the experience and this winter I will be working hard on my new project, a booklet on the two Othons and John, Bishop Grandisson of Exeter. I have started to read documents at the Exeter Cathedral library where I get help and encouragement.

P.S. If any readers of the *Swiss Observer* have any information on the history of Othon 1er and Othon 3e I would be most grateful to receive it.

Edith M. L. Grout

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

Mrs. Bea Sigerist (Territet) will celebrate her 91st birthday on 2nd March, Mr. Ulrich Stucky his 91st on 4th March and Mr. Louis Meier also his 91st on 5th March.

Dr. Hans W. Egli will be 81 on 17th March and Mr. Raymond Chappuis 84. Mr. Hugo Vonwiller will be 86 on 20th March and Mr. Paul Bessire has his 83rd birthday on the same day. Mr. William A. de Vigier, CBE, will have his birthday on 22nd March and Mrs. L. Giger hers on 24th. Mr. Alber Ferber will be 69 on 29th March and Mr. Rolf H. Senn on 30th.

Mr. and Mrs. Renè and Doris Baumann will celebrate their 18th Wedding Anniversary.

Congratulations and very best wishes to all these readers and any others of whose special days we are unaware.